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MALOVITSA PART OF THE RILA MOUNTAINS

Geografiya [Geography],
Vol VI, No 6, June 1956, Sofia,
Pages 9 - 14

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Entering the Iskrovet Valley, one's attention is attracted by the variety of the peaks in the Malovitsa part of the Rila Mountains, which form a kind of grandiose bastion or gigantic fortress wall. The view of all this from the Rural Monastery is especially splendid and amazing to the eye. It is as if the Rilaka River Valley were squeezed by the steep, almost perpendicular slopes of the neighboring peaks bordering it on the north. Imperceptibly the eye travels from the snow white columns of the monastery toward these peaks bathing in sunshine or snow clouds. However, the grandiosity and might of this section are best sensed from the Partizanska meadow. The rocky ridges and shapes of the tallest peaks of the Malovitsa rise above the gradually disappearing forest. The eye slides along the perpendicular walls of the peaks and the labyrinth of unnamed "rock needles" which rises strangely along the southern slopes here down to the clearly emerging southern wall of Elenin Peak.

The Malovitsa section is a part of the northwestern Rila Mountains. It is so named after its highest peak - Malovitsa. This part is in the center of the northwestern Rila Mountains, bordered by the Levi Iskur River, the Kobilino Pionishte saddle, the Sukho Lake, the Rilaka River, the Urdina River, and the Cherni Iskur River.

The ridge of the Malovitsa begins above Mala Tsurkva and Madzhare villages, over which rises the first low but beautiful Srednokos Peak. Beyond this, going from the northeast toward the southwest, stretches a rocky arch, along which the following peaks are

scattered: Popova Shapka (2,473 m), Lopushki Vrukh (2,710), Kupanite (2,870), Eliyat Zub (2,650), Orlovets (2,650), Elenin Vrukh (2,652), Malovitsa (2,731), Bodov (Burshtyavski) Vrukh (2,597), and Vurli Vrukh (2,595), with which the ridge ends, cut off by the deep valley of the Kleshnitsa River.

(The height of the peaks is given according to the data of the tourist map of the Rila Mountains by Pavel Deliradev.)

The Malovitsa part of the Rila Mountains is the only part which, in its orographic character comes rather close to that of the southern part of the central sector of the Pirin Mountains. The Malovitsa sector, and in particular the bottoms of the peaks, consist of granite with pegmatite, and in the upper parts of crystalline schists as well. The inclination of the layers is 10 to 15 degrees to the southwest. This is one of the reasons why the northern slopes of the peaks have formed perpendicular walls several hundred meters high, while their southwestern slopes are usually winding, inclined plateaus. Huge rocky masses and blocks lie at the foot of the peaks.

The beautiful chain of sharp peaks located along the main ridge of the mountain, which begins to the northeast of Lopushki Vrukh Peak and stretches archlike to the west as far as Malovitsa Peak, the circus formations on the north, and the steep and sometimes perpendicular southern slopes of the peaks, give this part of the mountain an entirely alpine character. The alpine nature of the Malovitsa sector sharply distinguishes it from the other parts of the mountains. It is the most inaccessible ridge of the Rila Mountains.

Malovitsa, and the Elenin Peak located south of it, are the earliest known peaks of this astonishing alpine group, while the peaks situated to the northeast remained unknown and unexplored until

recently, and are known only by their general name: the Rupite or Eupenite (Eupnite) Peaks, as they are known to the local population.

Gradually, our mountaineers, who have thoroughly explored the Malovitsa sector, rejected this vague name for the eastern peaks of the Malovitsa chain. They pinned them down and replaced them with exact names, which have become general knowledge in our mountaineering circles, and have been accepted in the geographical study of this part of the Rila Mountains.

The inexact and general name "Rupite" continued to be given to the large cirques in the north, beneath the peaks of the eastern part of the Malovitsa. This is literally correct, for etymologically the words "Rupa," or "Ropa," ("khoruba") mean "a hole."

The Kamilata Peak is separated from the Lovnita Peak by the Lovnishki Pass and runs northwest to Chernata Skala, from where it continues to the north between the Malovishka Reka River and the Preki Rivers, and is known as Ruzhdavitsa.

Southwest of Lovnitsa Peak is the Zliya Zub Peak, bisected by the Zliya Prelez Pass. A rocky ledge begins at the Zliya Zub Peak, and runs south. It has 2 small peaks with perpendicular walls, called the Dyavolski Igli Peaks. Another rocky ridge which forms the Dvuglaviya Peak, near the western side of which is located the small rocky Iglata Peak, also lies to the south of the Zliya Zub Peak. West of the Zliya Zub Peak stretch Orlovets Peak, the Petlita rock chain, the Elenin Vrukh and the Malovitsa Park. To the north, separated by the Malovishki Pass, are the Orleto and Malka Malovitsa Peaks, faced on the northwest by the Ushite Peak. North of these, between the Malovishka and Urdina valleys, the Kalbura chain continues.

Between the Ruzhdavitsa and Kalbura chains, and below the Malka Malovitsa Peak nestles the oldest tourist hut in this region -- the Malovitsa hut (2,050 m altitude), located 4 hours away from Govedartsi village. One half hour travel down from the hut, at the beginning of the Malovishka valley, is the picturesque Mecha Polyana meadow, on which the Central Alpine camp has been built. Throughout the year, Alpine climbers are trained here. Above the Malovitsa hut, in the circus situated between the Orlovets, Zliya Zub, Lovnitsa and Kamilata Peaks, at 2,500 m, is the improvised stone shelter "BAK," built by enthusiastic members of the Bulgarian Alpine Club. The Malovitsa valley is the most frequently visited place in this part, a fact which is much conditioned by the aforementioned adequate starting points for mountain trips. The easternmost end of the Malovitsa, under the Golyam Mehit Peak, has the "Samokovska Komuna" ski hut, which is another comfortable place from which to start trips. One of the best ski runs in Bulgaria begins there, and the neighborhood near Govedartsi village, includes numerous rest homes and stations.

To the north of the Malovitsa ridge the valleys of the Lopushka Reka River, the Prekite Reki Rivers, and the Malovitsa and Urdina valleys follow one upon the other from east to west. They have been shaped by former glaciers, and their deep cirques contain beautiful lakes bearing the same names, which are the sources of similarly named tributaries which flow into the right bank of the Cherni Iskur River. The Prekorechki Lakes were given new and interesting names. The highest and largest of them is Strashnoto Lake, located to the northwest and below the Kупenite Peaks. On its shore at 2,400 meters enthusiastic Sofia and Samikov alpinists built a small shelter bearing its name which is the best starting point for trips to surrounding alpine sites.

Under it, nestled among the spruce, is Svinskoto Lake. North of Lovnitsa Peak is Mineralnoto Lake, and north of the Kamilata Peak are the Malomalyovishki Lakes. The beautiful Elenini Lakes are located in the Malovitsa valley, north of Elenin Vrukh Peak and east of Malovitsa Peak.

The Popovski Lakes are located on the southern side of the ridge, between Popova Shapka Peak and Lopushki Peak. Beneath them is beautiful Sukho Lake. It is the beginning of the Sukhozerniya stream which joins the Rilaska Reka River at the Partisanska Polyana meadow. The Drushlyavitza River, also a right bank tributary of the Rilaska Reka River, begins on the southern slopes of the Dodov Vrukh Peak.

South of the Malovitsa ridge, deep among the southern slopes of the mountains between Lovnitsa Peak and Elenin Vrukh Peak, channels have been cut, which in the past were known by the general name "Elite Prototsi." They run down steep inclines, perpendicular in places toward the valley of the Rilaska Reka River. Only he who has wandered along the southern slopes of this section can understand how suitable their name is (Elite Prototsi means Evil Channels). It is difficult to traverse these stone channels, particularly during the autumn, winter, and spring, when they are covered with snow, or when with deafening noise they carry down the debris of avalanches or drag along large stones, jumping and falling, making a thunderous racket from rock to rock. These channels are even more treacherous when the snow begins to melt, and the waters decrease. Then, the silence of the mountain world is broken by the thunder of the falling of rocks, which is a frequent phenomenon in these places.

Gradually, the larger and more distinctive channels of the Elite Prototsi acquired individual names. The easternmost, which

runs down the southern side between the Lovnitsa and Zliya Zub Peaks toward the Partisanska Polyana Meadow, is called the Zliyat Uley channel, while the pass at which it starts is called Zliya Preles. The channel which starts at the southeastern part of Zliya Zub Peak from a natural composition of rocks is known as Kalkata, and runs, the steepest of all, between the Dyavolskite Igli Peaks and the Dvuglaviya Vrukh Peak toward the Partisanska Polyana Meadow, is called the Dyavolski Uley Channel. Crossing it is the most difficult of all, and this proves the adequacy of its name (Devil's Channel). The next to the west is the Siniyat Uley, which runs down between the western slopes of the Dvuglav and Iglata Peaks, starting at the pass between the latter and the Zliya Zub Peak. West of the Siniya Uley channel, toward Elenin Vrukh Peak, the southern slopes are dissected by numerous other smaller unnamed channels, which have kept their old general name, Zlita Prototsi.

This part of the Rila Mountains attracts tourists and alpinists. Seeing the peak rising in the skies, visitors on the Malovitsa are left breathless, and admire at length the alpine giants; in spring, still covered with snow, and wonderfully beautiful; in summer, bathing in abundant sunshine and raising their heads powerfully into the skies; and in autumn, surrounded by thick fog, mysterious and fascinating. During the winter, these peaks appear even more grandiose. They shine beneath the sun with their snow white cover, beautiful and dangerous, accessible only to the boldest.

The exploration of this least known part of the Rila Mountains is linked with the history of Bulgarian alpinism, in which have been recorded numerous examples of self-sacrifice and heroism. There are numerous such episodes. I would like to relate one of them.

A comrade and I had decided to make an attempt to make the first winter time ascent of the Iglata Peak. At sunrise on 25 April 1955, we left the Forest Hut at the Partizanska Polyana meadow. Our early start allowed us to cross the avalanche-prone sector at the foothills of the Dvuglav and Iglata Peaks easily. We reached the rocky edge of the Iglata Peak, and its snow covered grass and rock approaches on the western side. We had already begun the climbing of the edge, when the first omens of deteriorating weather appeared. We had not yet climbed the most difficult part when snow began to fall. The climb continued slowly, and gradually became more and more difficult. Ice coated the most dangerous places along the edge. The hands were chilling quickly, the wind was increasing, and our attempts to master the rocky ice-covered stretches were not always successful. Toward evening, at about 19 hours, we reached the peak. It had been a 15 hour struggle against great difficulties. The day had passed among the whistling of falling avalanches and storms, and they seemed only a beginning.

It was starting to grow dark when we started the descent along the northwestern edge of the peak. The narrow ledges were covered with snow. Slowly, and with an unsure hold on the hardened frozen rope to which we were tied, we reached the saddle between the Iglata and Dvuglav Peaks. The weather was worsening. Fog rolled in. The wind was blowing harder, and was soon to change into a snow storm. We were in a desperate situation. A snow roof had formed here in the small saddle where the winds blowing from the Siniya Uley channel and the channel between the Iglata and Dvuglav Peaks met. We were wet. The wind froze our clothes. We were really prisoners of the mountains. We had to spend the night there. This time, the snow roof, which is a dangerous and treacherous enemy of the alpinist, saved us. We dug

a snow cave inside it, in which, tied to poles which we wedged into the nearby rocks, we spent a hard, stormy, sleepless night. Sheltered from the onslaught of the snow storm and driving wind, we were saved from freezing by our improvised house. At sunrise, we crossed the icy western slope of Dvuglav Peak, and we climbed along the Siniya Uley channel in the pass between the Zliya Zub and Orlovets Peaks. From there we went down the Malovitsa valley, welcomed by the caresses of the rising spring sun.

Thus, in 3 decades, Bulgarian alpinists have conquered and explored the inaccessible walls of the peaks in the Malovitsa sector of the Rila Mountains, and have made their contribution to Bulgarian science.

FIGURE CAPTIONS

[Page 10 of original], Sketch of the Malovitsa part of the Rila Mountains

[Page 11 of original] The Kупeni Peaks with the Strashnoto lake in the Rila Mountains

[Page 12 of original] The Dvuglav and Iglata Peaks in the Malovitsa part of the Rila Mountains

[Page 13 of original] The following peaks named from left to right: Lopushki Vrukh, Kупenite, Lovnitsa, Kamilata, The Zliya Prelez pass, and Malovitsa peak

[Page 14 of original] Rila--The Dyavolski Igli Peaks and the Malovitsa part of the Rila Mountains

[Page 14 of original] Malovitsa Peak